



APRIL 2019

FACE AND FORM

Untitled, 1990 | Adrian Piper

Adrian Piper (American, born 1948). *Untitled*. 1990. Graphite on printed form. Framed (exterior): 21 1/2 × 16 1/2 in. (54.6 × 41.9 cm.) Sheet: 279 × 215 mm. (11 × 8 7/16 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Print & Drawing Society Fund, with proceeds derived from the 1993 Contemporary Print Fair, BMA 1993.62. © APRA Foundation Berlin

The words “Application for Employment” appear at the top of this work but this is much more than a simple job application. You see the usual questions and fields: name and address, social security number, qualifications, experience, references. However, you also notice a graphite drawing of a large face that takes up much of the space in the center of the form. Like a kind of ghostly watermark, the figure—whose only visible features are its head and neck—looks straight ahead with an open mouth, as though about to speak.

The artist, Adrian Piper, has used a generic application form and rendering of a face on it to deftly contrast how applications are used to create a “portrait” of a person and their worth in relation to the topic of the form. (In this case, their suitability for some type of paid work.) The application asks numerous questions and yet—in looking at the face on the form—the answers will tell us very little about that person and their aspirations, values, preferences, or challenges. Indeed, Piper is particularly focused on the way in which a form that is supposedly objective (note the phrase “an equal opportunity employer” at the top of the page) still focuses on opportunities (educational, professional, etc.) from which people of color have historically been excluded.

Reflecting on this contrast of face and form, the work takes on an eerie quality—what could that person tell us about themselves if we could hear them speak? Although the drawing of the face is actually on top of the form, it seems to recede behind the lines and words that create a barrier between the viewer and this unknown person.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Find a form or application and share it with students. Discuss what the form asks about a person. What does the form actually assess? What is it attempting to assess? What is the form missing? How much can a form actually tell us about a human being? How can a form perpetuate bias and exclusion?

Pair students together and have them collaboratively work on a questionnaire limited to 10 questions that they can use with each other. Ask them to fill out their partner’s answers. Then, ask the students to draw facial portraits of their partners. Have the class discuss what the portraits may have that the questionnaires were unable to capture, and vice versa.



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VISIT THE BMA AND SEE THIS WORK BY ADRIAN PIPER

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

(PRE-EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONNAIRE) (AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER)

Date _____

Name (Last Name First) _____ Soc. Sec. No. _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

What kind of work are you applying for? _____

What special qualifications do you have? _____

What office machines can you operate? _____

Are you 18 years or older? Yes _____ No _____

SPECIAL PURPOSE QUESTIONS

DO NOT ANSWER **ANY** OF THE QUESTIONS IN THIS FRAMED AREA UNLESS THE EMPLOYER HAS **CHECKED A BOX PRECEDING** A QUESTION, THEREBY INDICATING THAT THE INFORMATION IS REQUIRED FOR A BONA FIDE OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATION, OR DICTATED BY NATIONAL SECURITY LAWS, OR IS NEEDED FOR OTHER LEGALLY PERMISSIBLE REASONS.

☐ HEIGHT _____ FEET _____ INCHES _____ ☐ WEIGHT _____ LBS. ☐ CITIZEN OF U.S. YES _____ NO _____
☐ _____

MILITARY SERVICE RECORD

Armed Forces Service Yes _____ No _____ From _____ To _____

Branch of Service _____ Duties _____

Rank or rating at time of enlistment _____ Rating at time of discharge _____

Do you have any physical limitations that prohibit you from performing any work for which you are being considered? Yes _____ No _____ Please describe _____

EDUCATION

SCHOOL	*NO. OF YEARS ATTENDED	NAME OF SCHOOL	CITY	COURSE	*DID YOU GRADUATE?
GRAMMAR					
HIGH					
COLLEGE					
OTHER					

*The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals who are at least 40 but less than 70 years of age.

EXPERIENCE

NAME AND ADDRESS OF COMPANY	DATE		LIST YOUR DUTIES	STARTING SALARY	FINAL SALARY	REASON FOR LEAVING
	FROM	TO				

BUSINESS REFERENCES

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION

This form has been designed to strictly comply with State and Federal fair employment practice laws prohibiting employment discrimination. This Application for Employment Form is sold for general use throughout the United States. TOPS assumes no responsibility for the inclusion in said form of any questions which, when asked by the Employer of the Job Applicant, may violate State and/or Federal Law.

TOPS Form 3286 (Revised)

Litho in U.S.A.

BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART **BMA**

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